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## **Media for All: new developments**

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Gone are the days when audiovisual translation (AVT) was seen as a minor area within the broader domain of translation. It has now grown to be considered a discipline in its own right thanks to the numerous publications, conferences, courses, and research projects of recent years that have focussed on it as the main object of study.

The initial interest of professionals, who saw AVT as a source for profitable work on a global scale, soon gave way to academics' attention who found reason enough for developing training programmes and research projects in the area. In many ways, this new scholarly field has developed a character of its own probably deriving from the fact that its very foundations were built upon very strong interaction between the industry and academia. In what could be seen as a response to Wagner's appeal (in Chesterman and Wagner, 2002:133) for “a different kind of theory that we [professionals] could help to create: practice-oriented theory – a theory rooted in best practice, directed at improved practice, and attentive to practitioners

throughout the profession”, much has been written about ‘doing’ audiovisual translation, i.e. about the actual process. Volumes centred on the intricacies of the main AVT modes are reasonably common if not plentiful, with a significant number of works on dubbing (Hesse-Quack, 1969; Pommier, 1988; Ávila, 1997; Maier, 1997; Chaves García, 2000; Chaume, 2004; Paolinelli and Di Fortunato, 2005), subtitling (Ivarsson and Carroll, 1998; Díaz Cintas, 2003; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007; Bogucki, 2004), and subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (de Linde and Kay, 1999; Neves, 2005; Matamala and Orero, 2009). The remaining modes have been discussed to a lesser extent in academic exchanges, but readers can still find interesting works on voiceover (Franco, 2000; Pagon, 2007; Franco *et al.*, in press), audio description (Fix, 2005; Jiménez Hurtado, 2007), and even marginal activities like fansubbing (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; O’Hagan, 2006).

This list is by no means exhaustive but it amply demonstrates that there is a body of practice-based theoretical work that is quickly gaining recognition, contributing to what might soon be labelled as Audiovisual Translation Studies. Numerous other writings could be added to this nucleus, creating the potential for an interdisciplinary approach to this field.

In this sense, the scope of research topics has been widened, and a steady development can be perceived in the fact that most works have departed from the pioneering technical and linguistic approaches to encompass the sociocultural dimension of AVT. There is no doubt that the ubiquitous presence of audiovisual media in our society has had a positive effect on the visibility of AVT and has attracted enormous academic interest in this form of communication. As clear evidence of the fruitful marriage between Translation Studies and Cultural Studies, today’s AVT authors tend to show an increased awareness of the cultural embeddedness of translation. This awakening has led to the discussion in academic circles of a myriad of new issues connected with AVT, which are pushing the boundaries of AVT studies further away from canonical theoretical frameworks, for example some of the contributions that form part of this volume.

Traditional attitudes to our field meant that in the beginning the bulk of analysis and research was devoted to fiction films. Thankfully, the situation has changed considerably and the breadth of our scholarly analysis has expanded to include sitcoms, animation films, cartoons, documentaries, corporate videos and commercials to name but a few. From programmes primarily targeted at adult audiences, studies have now branched out to include productions designed with other audiences in mind, children and teenagers, for instance.

Despite all these developments, it may be too soon to speak of AVT as a discipline in its own right when Translation Studies (TS) itself is still not

accepted as such within the broader scholarly community. While TS is still addressed by some as a subsidiary of linguistics and comparative literature, Audiovisual Translation Studies will have to work towards making TS worthy of an independent existence. In many ways, AVT could potentially elevate the status of Translation Studies thanks to the polymorphic nature of its research object and the fact that it makes use of knowledge from diverse fields, at the same time as feeding into fields of research that are equally diverse.

Research projects in AVT draw both from fields in the social and in the so-called exact sciences. Even though linguistics continues to be the focus of most such projects, and contact with the arts and social sciences comes naturally, others are reaching out to areas as diverse as medical sciences, informatics, statistics and engineering, domains which do not normally interact with mainstream research in the arts. Furthermore, the close connection that AVT presently has with technology, with global economy and with industry at large makes it a field with endless applications and approaches and a strong candidate for testing continual change and development.

In principle, audiovisual translation is innate to humankind; people have been translating the audio/visual world which they live in from time immemorial. Every expression in art is, in its own way, a form of AVT. However, AVT can be connected to the advent of the moving image and of the talkie in particular. What might seem to be little more than a philosophical discussion, serves to justify a few of the underlying premises of AVT studies today. Focus no longer seems to be placed solely on the intricacies of linguistic transfer, but has broadened to include the other 'transferables' that Jakobson (1959) enclosed in the all encompassing 'intersemiotic translation'. His tri-partite view of translation – i.e. interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic –, has come to be seen as a springboard for the systematic growth of the field. The verbal and/or the technical dimensions no longer seem to be the only ground on which AVT is differentiated from other translation practices; it continues to challenge research methodologies and to question existing theories. New trends in studies in AVT are now to be found in a close focus on the multi-functional, multi-layered polymorphic nature of audiovisual texts in general and in the complexities that derive both from context and reception. More and more often, studies are taking AVT outside its own parameters. Long gone are the days when it was associated exclusively with the screen. AVT is now making information and leisure available to everyone in contexts as diverse as to sports events, on public transports, green spaces, funfairs, public functions, museums, and as many places as those in which communication is to take place.

It is now clear that the “new dynamic umbrella” that Orero (2004) wrote about in her introduction to *Topics in Audiovisual Translation* is rapidly growing and re-shaping itself to cover an ever-changing reality. Just as it is true that AVT is now to be found in every conceivable context, it is equally true to say that the challenges that each new context poses share common ground with the more traditional ones and paves the way to new avenues of research. As Gambier (2003:179) puts it in regard to screen translation, the keyword in the all-encompassing domain of AVT as it stands today is that of accessibility. In many ways, AVT has basically crept both into old and new contexts to make information, knowledge and leisure available to each and everyone of us.

At present both information and entertainment are closer to the end-user than ever before and are available in multiple platforms and formats. However, there are still a few barriers to be broken before the content can be considered fully accessible. This is of course one of the crucial objectives of AVT and media accessibility.

On the one hand, language is undoubtedly a barrier. By means of various transfer modes that have been traditionally described and analysed within AVT studies (e.g. subtitling, dubbing, voiceover, interpreting, etc.), content is made accessible to those who do not understand the original language. Sensorial barriers are another hindrance, which are being overcome thanks to subtitling, audio description and sign language, just to name some of the main modalities which are at the core of media accessibility, a new research line which has been perfectly accommodated under the umbrella of AVT studies.

This innovative line of research is nowadays the focus of TransMedia, an international research group made up of academics and practitioners from different universities and companies with a common interest in audiovisual media transfer. Since 2004, the group has been concentrating on media accessibility and has organised three conferences, with a fourth one to be forthcoming in London.

*Media for All I* was held at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2005 and showed the state of the art in media accessibility. Professional experience and incipient research were presented, and initiatives and training models were proposed. It became clear that media accessibility could not just be the result of voluntary work and that measures had to be taken to make audiovisual media accessible to all, as accessibility is a human right. The result of this first conference was that a book of selected papers which dealt with subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, audio description, and sign language, sampled their use in Europe, and gathered relevant contributions by practitioners and academics (Díaz Cintas, Orero and Remael, 2007).

A conference held at the Instituto Politécnico de Leiria in Portugal in November 2007 followed. *Media for All II: Text on Air, Text on Screen* brought together professionals, scholars, practitioners and other interested parties to explore AVT in theory and practice, discuss its linguistic and cultural dimensions, and investigate the relevance of translation theory to this very specific quickly expanding translational genre. It also promoted cooperation in AVT between the business and the educational worlds, and special attention was devoted to accessibility issues.

The present book is the result of this second conference: it includes not only selected papers from the conference but also contributions by other authors who have been invited to take part in this volume in order to offer a wide overview of the current state of AVT studies. Apart from updated research on media accessibility, an extremely active field in AVT, the changing landscape in the audiovisual world has given a boost to new fascinating practices such as respeaking and has opened new markets and applications to long established transfer modes, such as dubbing in Poland.

The book has been divided into three distinctive sections pivoting around the main areas of subtitling and dubbing, media accessibility covering SDH and AD, and different didactic applications of AVT.

The first section of the book includes eight chapters on subtitling and dubbing and opens with an article written by Patrick Zabalbeascoa, entitled *Translation in constrained communication and entertainment*, in which the author puts forward several new concepts for dealing with translation in a fast-changing world which requires rethinking certain approaches to translation and to communication. The first concept is that of constrained communication, which encompasses practically all communicative situations, as opposed to a more ideal one that exploits complex combinations of messages sent in such a way as to be perceived by four or even five senses at the same time. Such an approach finds interesting common ground between constraints, regardless of whether they are due to individuals – personal limitations or disabilities – or to the communicative environment.

As mentioned before, AVT has seen one of the greatest and fastest evolutions in the field of Translation Studies over the last few years, and although most works have focussed on audiovisual materials that share a similar function – entertainment and/or instruction – the translation of audiovisual advertising texts has received hardly any scholarly attention. As argued by Adrián Fuentes Luque in his article, *Audiovisual advertising: 'Don't adapt to the text, be the text'*, these texts are very different in many ways: from the length of the message and its function (mainly persuasive) to the purpose (to sell a given product or service). In addition, they are designed in numerous, new forms, distributed in several media, like TV, cinema and

the internet, and are dubbed or subtitled. Illustrating his article with concrete translation examples from commercials, he offers a thorough analysis of the main characteristics that define audiovisual advertising texts and delves into their evolution in the media in terms of format, mode, and constraints.

Due to the time and space constraints on subtitling, one of its traditional characteristics has been the omission of many linguistic and paralinguistic features that are present in the original soundtrack. One such feature that is often considered redundant, and therefore frequently not translated, is discourse particles. In *But that's like, it's not all that I am, you know. The Swedish subtitling of discourse particle you know in ten US films*, Jenny Mattsson focusses on the two main meanings, textual and interpersonal, of the English particle 'you know' and analyses how these functions are conveyed – or lost – in the Swedish subtitled version. The study shows evidence of a clear tendency for the textual function to be translated more often than the interpersonal one.

Jan Pedersen, in his paper *When do you go for benevolent intervention? How subtitlers determine the need for cultural mediation*, deals with the problems involved in transferring cultural references in subtitling. The importance of appraising the transculturality level (i.e. how well known a reference is in the target culture) of these references is stressed, and also how such an appraisal can be carried out. This is done in order to answer the crucial question of when it may be legitimate for a subtitler to go for benevolent intervention in order to help the viewers understand a cultural reference, and thus make sense of the text. According to the findings of the author, there are indications that benevolent intervention is not always carried out anymore, and viewers are thus sometimes left in the dark.

In *Towards a creative approach in subtitling: a case study*, Anna Foerster explores creative new trends in subtitling. She first offers an overview of conventional subtitling practices and points to the invisibility paradox in the field of subtitling. She then explores the aesthetic dimensions provided by subtitles. The English subtitles of the Russian film *Night Watch* (2004) are analysed and compared with the way conventional subtitling practice is carried out. The author discusses whether aesthetic subtitling has the potential to become a professionally recognised approach and concludes that although a more inventive approach to subtitling may be needed, traditional practices should not be forgotten altogether.

In the last article on the field of subtitling, a professional overview is offered by Kristijan Nikolić in *The subtitling profession in Croatia*. Based on personal experience, a survey amongst subtitlers and an interview with the Head of the Translation and Subtitling Department of the Croatian public television *Hrvatska Televizija*, the main goal of this contribution is to find out the kind of professional training that practising subtitlers have received and,

if none, whether they would be interested in any potential form of professional training. It also aims to gauge their opinion as to whether research is important and relevant for their daily work.

The article by Irene Ranzato, entitled *Localising Cockney: translating dialect into Italian*, marks the transition to dubbing. According to this author, one of the most fertile, lively and creative objects of research today can be found in the marriage between sociolinguistics and dialectology with translation in general, and AVT in particular, thanks to the varied and exhaustive number of examples of linguistic variation at phonological, syntactical, and lexical levels offered by audiovisual texts. In the case of Italian, the translators' attitude towards linguistic variations is still markedly influenced by the strong emphasis placed during their formative years on the study of Standard English and Received Pronunciation. Examples taken from films of various genres and dubbed in different periods help the author illustrate some of the strategies which have been used to dub the Cockney variant of English into Italian. She also tries to detect the most appropriate solutions that help achieve a pleasant exotic effect without falling into any of the two potential extremes, i.e. of an incoherent localisation or banal neutralisation.

The last article in the first section of this volume is written by Agnieszka Chmiel. Screen translation in Poland has long focussed on voiceover and its market position seems to be strengthened by rather unsuccessful dubbing attempts. However, in her paper *Translating postmodern networks of cultural associations in the Polish dubbed version of Shrek*, she argues that the audience's generally negative approach to dubbed films in Poland has changed thanks to *Shrek*. After presenting a general overview of AVT in Poland and describing the polysystem of films in the country, the author analyses the main strategies applied in the dubbing of *Shrek*, a highly intertextual original work. She emphasises the fact that the dialogue exchanges and US cultural referents were domesticated when dubbed into Polish, and this is one of the reasons why they appealed to Polish viewers since jocular allusions to Polish reality and culture abounded. In the author's view, this domesticating approach seems to have changed the perception of many Polish viewers towards dubbing.

The second section of this book is made up of six chapters dealing with one of today's most thriving translation areas: media accessibility. The first three contributions focus mainly on subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, whilst the remaining three are devoted to the practice of audio description for the blind and the partially sighted. Agnieszka Szarkowska's article, *Accessibility to the media by hearing impaired audiences in Poland: problems, paradoxes, perspectives*, examines the accessibility situation for hearing impaired viewers in Poland. After offering an overview of subtitles

for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) and sign language interpreting (SLI) in Poland, the article explores the availability of these two AVT modes on television, DVDs and in cinemas. Although SDH has been available to the Polish public on TV since 1994, it is the author's contention that its provision is still inadequate. Similarly to other countries, SDH is also subject to debate on whether edited or verbatim subtitles are better for the hearing impaired audience. Unlike other countries, SLI available on public TV does not use Polish Sign Language, a natural means of communication among Deaf Poles, but Signed Polish, a system of signing based on the Polish oral language. This has also fuelled controversy within the Deaf community since not only is Signed Polish incomprehensible to many viewers, but it is also ideologically unacceptable. The article ends with a discussion of legal regulations on media accessibility and some suggestions for improving accessibility to AVT programmes for hearing impaired viewers.

Soledad Zárate, in *Bridging the gap between Deaf Studies and AVT for Deaf children*, also deals with subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, concentrating on the special needs of children. Now that the main British national channels have reached a SDH target of 80% to 100% of all their programmes broadcast, the author claims that very little research has been conducted on subtitling for deaf children, and the guidelines and standards relied on, which resulted from research carried out in the early 1980s, are clearly outdated and do not take into consideration the full potential of digital technology. She takes an interdisciplinary approach in order to bridge the gap between AVT and Deaf Studies, two fields that have so far developed independently. Focussing on the reading comprehension abilities of hearing impaired children, and looking at dimensions such as syntax and vocabulary, the author proposes ways on how this knowledge can be extrapolated to improve current SDH practices.

The last contribution on the topic of SDH, *Standing on quicksand: hearing viewers' comprehension and reading patterns of respoken subtitles for the news*, is written by Pablo Romero-Fresco and deals with respoken subtitles. Although the interest regarding live subtitles is shifting from quantity to quality, given that broadcasters such as the BBC already subtitle 100% of their programmes, hardly any research has been carried out on how viewers receive this type of subtitle. The author's aim is to cast some light on this issue by means of two empirical experiments focussing on comprehension and viewing patterns of subtitled news. The results obtained in the first experiment suggest that some of the current subtitles provided for the news in the UK prevent viewers from being able to focus on both the images and the subtitles, which results in an overall poor comprehension of the programme. In order to ascertain whether this is due to the speed of the subtitles or to other factors, a second experiment is also included. In this case, an eye-



tracker has been used to record the participants' viewing patterns. The results show that the word-for-word display mode of live subtitles results in viewers spending 90% of their time looking at the subtitles and only 10% looking at the images, affecting overall comprehension.

The next three articles in the book turn to audio description for the blind and the partially sighted. The phases of audio describing a film are explained by Gala Rodríguez Posadas in *Audio description as a complex translation process: a protocol*. The film chosen is *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2004), of which the Spanish AD was commissioned to the author of the article. Each stage is described in detail, from the first contact with the client to the recording of the final script, and the author places particular emphasis on stages in production, trying to ascertain the issue of problem-solving from a functional perspective and basing her approach on a theoretical framework inspired by Risku (1998).

In her article *The benefits of audio description for blind children*, Alicia Palomo López focusses on AD for children, with its own particular features and requirements. She presents a contrasting analysis of an empirical corpus formed by two audio descriptions, one in English and one in Spanish, of the same Disney film: *Lady and the Tramp* (1955). The study focusses on the amount of description provided, the type of language used, the tone and delivery of the narration, and the treatment of songs, music, and sound effects. The researcher also discusses to what extent official guidelines and recommendations by British and Spanish bodies are followed. She claims that visually impaired and blind children have different needs from the general public, as they are more likely to have delayed language than other children because of the gaps in their experience, and defends the view that these children can acquire and develop language skills through the use of audio described films.

Finally, Cristóbal Cabeza i Cáceres, in his article *Opera audio description at Barcelona's Liceu theatre*, starts describing AD practices in Catalonia and the UK and then moves on to propose a new method of AD implemented in Barcelona's opera house by researchers from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona which includes audio introductions and a comprehensive AD that does not overlap with the lyrics. With Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* as his case study, he describes the process of audio describing an opera – documentation, attending the dress rehearsals, writing the AD and live testing the AD – and summarises the main challenges found in this particular production.

The third and final section of this volume consists of four articles discussing some didactic applications of AVT. The first contribution, by Elena Zagar Galvão and Isabel Galhano Rodrigues, deals with simultaneous interpreting in *The importance of listening with one's eyes: a case study of*

*multimodality in simultaneous interpreting.* The authors concentrate on nonverbal communication in simultaneous interpreting and address the main functions of gestures in the booth. Their main objective is to compare the relationship between nonverbal communication (especially hand gestures) and speech in speakers, trainee simultaneous interpreters and professional simultaneous interpreters using a multimedia corpus. The first part of the article explains how the multimedia corpus was collected and prepared for analysis; the second part provides a multimodal microanalysis of various short clips extracted from one of the speeches and their parallel interpretations, and the third and final part focusses on the preliminary conclusions that can be drawn at this stage of their project.

Designing an AVT module requires the development of both practical and theoretical approaches. Reflection on translation has taken place throughout the centuries, thus contributing to the shaping of a contemporary theoretical framework, and it is only natural that students should be made aware of these issues. In *Translation goes to the movies: a didactic approach*, Maria José Veiga acknowledges that it can be hard for translation teachers in general, and more particularly AVT teachers, to approach translation issues with their students from a theoretical standpoint, particularly when the technical component of AVT courses seems so appealing when compared to reading texts. She then suggests some avenues for exploring scenes in films that relate directly to the discussion of some seminal texts on translation matters. The methodological approach that she posits places emphasis on the use of films directly related to questions posed by the topic of translation: its aims, practices, limits, and so forth. The main focus is on feature films, namely *Lost in Translation* (2003), *The Interpreter* (2005) and *Babel* (2006), so as to underline their potential ground for theoretical reflection on translational dynamics, and to shed light on some methodological questions raised when approaching the complexity of (audiovisual) translation as subject matter.

From a pedagogical perspective, Conceição Bravo, in *Text on screen and text on air: a useful tool for foreign language teachers and learners*, describes an experiment carried out in Portugal to test the effect of subtitling exposure on the understanding of English, hence on the validity of AVT as a language learning tool. Two groups of Portuguese state school students aged 13-14 were chosen: whilst one was exposed to interlingual subtitles (English-audio and Portuguese-subtitles), the other one was exposed to intralingual subtitles (English-audio and English-subtitles). Besides raising learners' awareness of this learning resource, some of the issues analysed by means of tests – several weeks after the experiment and again three months after its conclusion – included the vocabulary acquired, their understanding of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs. The author concludes that AVT can

promote autonomous language learning as a life-long process, as well as mediating linguistic, social and cultural issues between source and target communities.

The last of the contributions in this volume is by Noa Talaván and considers *Subtitling as a task and subtitles as support: Pedagogical applications*. The author analyses the role of reading subtitles and producing subtitles as functional activities and didactic tools in foreign language education. Firstly, it examines the need for the educational use of both subtitles and subtitling in the classroom. Then, it provides a sample activity that exploits both tools with the aim of improving oral comprehension skills. All in all, the didactic application of an activity based on the use of subtitles as learning support and of subtitling as the active production of subtitles by students in front of the computer, entails a series of benefits outlined by the author; namely it assists students in the development of oral comprehension skills, provides them with different types of support (visual, textual, and technological) for language development, encourages learners to face authentic input, and produces tangible output (the subtitles produced by students) that can be shared with their peers (or even on the web).

This selective compilation of 18 studies constitutes a rounded vision of the many ways in which media accessibility and audiovisual translation can be approached from an academic point of view. Not only do these contributions highlight present interests and developments in AVT, but they also offer a prospective outlook by opening up new avenues and new routes of research in audiovisual translation. It is hoped that the articles compiled here will provide food for thought and trigger reflection on the rapidly changing times and changing attitudes to translation.

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